

-RESEARCH PAPER-

INSTITUTIONAL MAINTENANCE OF E-COMMERCE THROUGH TRADITIONAL RETAIL¹

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Abstract

This study analyzes the process of opening traditional, physical retail stores by e-commerce companies as institutional work of maintenance. Past research examines internal mechanisms used to maintain institutions and ignores the question of how an external, alternative institution can contribute to the maintenance of another institution. This study shows that traditional retail as a relatively old institution helps maintain e-commerce as a relatively new institution through eight different mechanisms at four levels including customers, employees, suppliers, and companies themselves. For customers, traditional stores help concretize e-commerce companies and personalize customer experience. For employees, they create new tasks and responsibilities and increase their involvement in both strategic and daily decisions. For suppliers, they develop trust by making e-commerce companies a concrete entity to do business with and promote visibility by expanding the product range and reach. Lastly, for companies themselves, they increase brand awareness and result in growth through additional marketing and sales opportunities. Traditional retail thus strengthens the position of e-commerce companies in the market by facilitating better relations with their customers, employees, and suppliers as well as directly contributes to companies' image and growth.

Keywords: *Institutional Work, Institutional Maintenance, E-commerce, Traditional Retail.*

JEL Codes: *M10, M19.*

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E-TİCARETİN GELENEKSEL PERAKENDECİLİK ÜZERİNDEN KURUMSAL MUHAFAZASI⁴

Öz

Bu çalışma e-ticaret firmalarının geleneksel fiziksel mağaza açma süreçlerini bir kurumsal muhafaza işi olarak çözümlenmektedir. Kurumsal muhafaza üzerine yapılan çalışmalar genellikle içsel süreçlere odaklanmakta, muhafaza edilecek kurumun yerine geçme olasılığı da olan bir başka dışsal kurumun etkisini görmezden gelmektedir. Bu çalışma, nispeten eski bir kurum olan geleneksel perakendeciliğin, nispeten yeni bir kurum olan e-ticaretin muhafazasına, müşteri, çalışan, tedarikçi, ve firma düzeylerinde işleyen sekiz farklı süreçle katkısını incelemektedir. İlk, geleneksel mağazalar e-ticaret firmalarının somutlaşmasına yardım ederken müşteriye kişisel bir deneyim sunmaktadır. İkincisi, çalışanlar için yeni görevler ve sorumluluklar yaratan mağazalar, çalışanların stratejik ve operasyonel kararlara katılımını da kolaylaştırmaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, e-ticareti geleneksel bir görünüme kavuşturan, ürüne erişimi arttıran, ve ürün yelpazesini çeşitlendiren mağazalarla birlikte, tedarikçilerin e-ticaret konusundaki görece güvensizliği azalmakta ve piyasadaki görünürlükleri artmaktadır. Son olarak, firmalar mağazalar yardımıyla marka bilinirliği sağlamakta ve yeni pazarlama ve satış olanaklarıyla büyümeye devam etmektedirler. Dolayısıyla geleneksel perakendecilik e-ticaret firmalarının müşterileri, çalışanları ve tedarikçileriyle daha iyi ilişkiler geliştirmesine yol açarak piyasadaki konumlarını güçlendirirken, firmaların tanınırlığına ve büyümesine de doğrudan katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kurumsal İş, Kurumsal Muhafaza, E-ticaret, Geleneksel Perakendecilik.

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'Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.'

4 Genişletilmiş Türkçe özet İngilizce metinden sonra, kaynakçadan önce yer almaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION

Retail is one of the oldest human activities. From the beginning of simple trading to the first shopping malls in the USA in the 1930s, it developed from a primitive exchange of goods and services to a globally dominant industry (Feinberg and Meoli, 1991). With the internet, the retail industry saw drastic changes. E-commerce companies emerged and became a real threat to traditional retail stores. For example, in terms of market value, Amazon managed to surpass WalMart, which was the biggest retail company in the world in terms of revenue (Pettypiece, 2015). As a result, retail companies started to open e-commerce websites to catch the trend and get a share from the increasing online sales. However, in the last few years, this trend reversed. Digitally born companies began to open their brick-and-mortar stores. Amazon, Warby Parker, Nasty Gal, Everlane, Bonobos, and Birchbox are among the first companies opening traditional retail stores (Shearman, 2016). Even in developing countries like Turkey, e-commerce-only companies started to open physical stores.

This new trend is ironic. Amazon, for example, started its operations by selling books and continued with its innovation of e-readers and e-books. It changed reading habits and forced many traditional bookstores to close down (Butler, 2014). As an e-commerce giant, it then decided to open its own brick-and-mortar stores (Schaub, 2018). The company currently has more than 20 stores in 11 different states of the US (Amazon, 2020). Warby Parker, another successful e-commerce company that opens physical retail stores, creates a lot of additional traffic for its website and increases e-commerce sales through those stores (Walsh, 2016).

Brick-and-mortar stores thus positively influence e-commerce companies' position in the market. Traditional retail as a relatively established institution seems to contribute to the maintenance of e-commerce as a relatively new institution although the former is significantly undermined and increasingly replaced by the latter. These are actually two alternative institutions that can be disruptive for one another. Then, the question is how traditional physical stores help maintain non-traditional online stores. What are the general mechanisms, which shape the specific actions and practices of actors towards institutional maintenance and can explain the positive effect of traditional retail on e-commerce? The question is important to understand the ironic and increasing trend of e-commerce companies entering traditional retail business. The positive effect of offline on online business seems to be the general reason why e-commerce companies open physical stores. However, we do not know how this effect emerges or what mechanisms operate to generate this effect and turn the efforts of companies, employees, suppliers, and even customers into work of maintenance. The mechanisms can give us an idea of how this risky undertaking is pursued and achieved when e-commerce companies do not have experience in traditional retail. They can help analyze the reasons and outcomes of the early adopters' move to go traditional. Hence, the

general mechanisms that transform actors' even daily activities into maintenance work and thus facilitate the positive effect of offline on online business and the maintenance of the latter through the former can help guide other e-commerce companies planning to open their own physical stores.

This study analyzes this process of opening physical retail stores by e-commerce companies as institutional work of maintenance (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2009). Institutional work is “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006:215). It refers to both physical and mental efforts to affect institutions (Lawrence et al., 2011). It might be based on “a future-oriented intentionality, focused on consciously and strategically reshaping social situations” or “involve a practical form of intentionality, focused on managing the exigencies of immediate situations”; yet, “most commonly, perhaps, the intentionality of institutional work might look like habit” (Lawrence et al., 2011:53). Hence, the purpose and intention are not always clear in institutional work; they might be hidden behind practical responses to daily contingencies and habitual ways of dealing with those contingencies. In fact, “actors are not always aware of their intentions, or may have one intention but act in a way that does not serve these claimed intentions, or even contradict them” (Zilber, 2013:87). Intentions also change, depending on the temporal, social, and political context of actors. Still, actors' efforts have consequences and affect institutions. The effects of individual and collective efforts can amount to institutional creation, disruption, and/or maintenance. Organizational researchers increasingly study institutional maintenance in different contexts (e.g. Gawer and Phillips, 2013; Mena and Suddaby, 2016; Turnbull and Wass, 2015; Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). However, most research examines internal mechanisms/means used to maintain institutional norms and practices (Blanc and Huault, 2011; Clark and Newell, 2013; Grafstrom and Windell, 2012; Nite et al., 2016; Raviola and Norback, 2013). The research ignores the question of how an external, alternative institution like physical retail is used to maintain another institution like e-commerce. This study focuses on this gap and examines how e-commerce companies utilize physical stores for their own sustainability and maintenance.

In the context of this study, “institution represents a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property... By order or pattern”, it is referred “to standardized interaction sequences. An institution is then a social pattern that reveals a particular reproduction process. When departures from the pattern are counteracted in a regulated fashion, by repetitively activated, socially constructed, controls – that is by some set of rewards and sanctions – we refer to a pattern institutionalized” (Jepperson, 1991:145). Using this definition, we consider traditional physical retail and e-commerce as two different institutions. Unlike wholesale, retail refers to the final activities and steps to provide goods or services

directly for customers (Dunne et al., 2014). Traditional retail usually includes a physical store or office, which shapes and more or less standardizes interactions between customers and companies. It is a particular interaction, in which brick-and-mortar stores enable customers to see and try the product or experience the service before the purchase. Physical retail as an institution is based on this experience logic. Face-to-face, direct interaction between companies and customers and resulting experience are essential. The direct interaction reproduces the experience logic. The role of technology is to support this interaction. Customers reward experience with increasing sales while punishing poor experience with decreasing sales, again reproducing the experience logic as well as interaction pattern that results in satisfactory experience. With a different logic, customers reward or punish e-commerce companies as well. E-commerce or online retail is the process of selling goods or services over the internet (Laudon and Traver, 2016). E-commerce offers speed and convenience to customers through digital technologies and thus, as an institution, is based on this convenience logic. In fact, e-commerce companies are digitally born and usually defined as technology companies. Relatively indirect interaction between companies and customers is mediated by sophisticated technology, which allows customers to easily compare different products or sellers in terms of price, delivery time, quality, and customer service. Hence, as in traditional retail, interactions are more or less standardized yet with a focus on convenience. Digital technologies help reproduce the convenience logic as well as associated indirect interactions. Customers then value and repeat convenient sales together with company practices that support and improve convenience. Therefore, the study analyzes traditional retail and e-commerce as two different institutions with their own logics and practices to provide a conceptual perspective on the maintenance of e-commerce as an institution through traditional retail as another institution.

1.1. Literature Review

Institutional work draws attention to the agency of actors in sustaining, modifying, and changing institutions (Ağlargoç, 2015; Koç and Vurgun, 2012; Lawrence et al., 2011). Institutional change is not the only process where agency is important. Institutional maintenance is also based on actors' ongoing efforts. It is a relatively neglected area of study as institutions are generally considered self-reproducing (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). In fact, for institutional maintenance, actors need to put in significant effort, sometimes partly modifying the existing practices while preserving the general understanding behind those practices. This effort is facilitated by several mechanisms/means.

The existing institutional practices themselves are a mechanism of maintenance (Acquier et al., 2018; Bouty et al., 2013; Malsch and Gendron, 2013; Nite et al., 2016). One example is Michelin, which rates restaurants and hotels in a guide released every autumn (Bouty et al., 2013). The guide currently includes over

30.000 restaurants and hotels all around the world, making Michelin the dominant actor in rating haute cuisine. Michelin maintains its dominance by branching in other continents outside its home in Europe. It uses its established star rating system outside Europe as well. The company carries a traditional practice to other places in a way that generates excitement among the stakeholders in haute cuisine as some restaurants and hotels gain or lose stars every autumn. In fact, the restaurants and hotels outside Europe adapt to the Michelin's practice. As a result, Michelin becomes a key player in other continents and strengthens its dominant position in haute cuisine rating.

Another mechanism is institutional rules and norms (Heaphy, 2013; Koskela-Huotari et al., 2016; Labelle and Rouleau, 2017; Wright et al., 2017; Zilber, 2002, 2009). In a hospital, for instance, patient advocates take on the role of bridge and use rules to solve conflicts between medical staff, patients, and their families (Heaphy, 2013). Against the disruption of conflicts on the established roles and relations between these groups, they explain rules to patients or their families to address their complaints or to medical staff to change their approach or process. By using the power of rules, patient advocates, who have almost no power over neither patients and families nor medical staff, manage to handle conflicts and help maintain the relative roles of each group.

Roles are actually a mechanism to reproduce institutions (Clark and Newell, 2013; Collien et al., 2016; Currie et al., 2012; Heinze and Weber, 2016; Symon et al., 2008). The response of clinical geneticists in the UK to a project of the Department of Health is an example (Currie et al., 2012). The project allows the nurses specialized in the area of genetics to deliver genetics service to patients as well as give professional advice to other nurses and even doctors. This defies the common hierarchy between doctors and nurses. In some cases, the geneticists respond by defining their role as the lead actor and the role of genetics nurses as their assistants. They delegate daily tasks to the nurses with little autonomy. In other cases, they give the nurses more autonomy with some non-routine tasks to focus on the tasks that require their expertise. In all cases, though, they preserve their dominant institutional position.

Like roles, rituals and symbols can be used in institutional work of maintenance (Blanc and Huault, 2011; Creed et al., 2010; Dacin et al., 2010; Styhre, 2013). For example, the students, academicians, college master, and staff at different colleges of Cambridge University follow formal dining rituals, which contribute to the maintenance of the British class system (Dacin et al., 2010). Through those rituals, especially the students experience and internalize stratified relations among people of different social ranks. They acquire the knowledge of how to socialize and bond with the elite. They carry the norms and behaviors they learn from the performance of rituals through their lives after graduation when they generally occupy elite positions in the society. The rituals thus help them become elites,

contributing to the stability of the British class system.

Among the mechanisms is also technology commonly used as part of institutional routines and practices (Colombero and Boxenbaum, 2019; Grafstrom and Windell, 2012; Norback, 2019; Turnbull and Wass, 2015). As an example, unpaid work is an institutional practice among police inspectors facilitated by technology (Turnbull and Wass, 2015). Although it sometimes creates extreme pressures on the inspectors, many inspectors work overtime without keeping record and exceed their weekly maximum of 48 hours. With emails, text messages, and online systems, they are always available. They use cell phones and laptops to respond to emails and messages even though they are not officially on duty.

Therefore, past research generally addresses the mechanisms of institutional maintenance internal to a particular institution such as haute cuisine rating, healthcare, social class, and police work. It does not look into the role of an alternative, different institution in maintenance. This is understandable since alternative institutions are likely to have disruptive effects. Still, this is an important question to study and improve our understanding on institutional maintenance. There is notably one research examining the mass media and partly touching on this question (Raviola and Norback, 2013). Printed and internet media are two alternative institutions. Unlike a printed newspaper, a website does not have page restrictions. Covering many different topics is possible and useful to attract more readers. A website is also dynamic; its contents can be updated with the most recent news. An Italian newspaper that covers business news responds to the disruption of internet media by preparing its website version. Yet, the newspaper follows the traditional approach on the website, publishing sports news only weekends and preparing a new front page when the main page of the website is updated. The research thus shows the use of approaches still internal to printed media though it implies that internet media as an institution can contribute to printed media as another institution. In fact, the actors of printed media respond to the threat of internet media rather than use the latter to maintain the former. In contrast, this study analyzes how an institution, traditional physical retail, can be used to maintain another institution, e-commerce, trying to understand the underlying mechanisms of this institutional maintenance.

2. METHOD

This study examines institutional maintenance as a social process. It inductively uses the data of e-commerce companies to develop a perspective on the use of an institution to maintain another institution. Hence, it utilizes qualitative methodology, which helps understand the experiences of social actors involved in the process of institutional maintenance (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative methodology enables researchers to comprehensively describe and analyze actors' experiences, which become the basis of a new perspective. It is also flexible,

allowing the integration of new, relevant data as the analysis evolves (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Van Maanen, 1998).

2.1. Research Site and Data

In line with the research question, we searched for e-commerce companies in Turkey, which started to operate as online/e-commerce-only at least five years ago and later opened at least one physical store. Based on a report by TÜBİSAD (2019), we identified 799 e-commerce companies with a monthly user of at least 15.000 in 2017. There were 358 companies selling products through a channel that was not a website. We found that the majority had not begun its operations as an online company. In fact, there were only four companies starting online-only, operating more than five years, and having physical stores. They included Vivense, E-Bebek, Evidea, and Supplementler.com. These companies differed in terms of customer base as well as year of founding and of opening the first store. This diversity was unintentional but welcomed as it helped understand the common pattern in the different segments of the e-commerce industry. A brief profile of each company can be seen in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The main data came from the interviews with the top managers and directors of the companies, who were most knowledgeable about the process of opening physical stores. The first author contacted the participants between May and December 2018 and conducted a total of ten interviews between September and December 2018. The interviews lasted about 45 minutes on average. Most interviews were conducted over audio or video call since the researcher was in Ankara and all the participants were in Istanbul. With the consent of the participants, all the interviews were recorded fully and transcribed later.

In addition to the Turkish companies, we searched through the media outlets for additional data we could use in this study. We found 16 companies from different countries, which started as online-only and opened physical stores eventually, with the interviews with their top managers who explained the process of opening physical stores. Even though those interviews were not as detailed as the interviews conducted for this study, they were still useful as supplementary material, giving some insights into the process. The companies in the interviews were founded and opened their first stores in different years, selling a wide range of products. Also, they were located in different countries. Among the companies were e-commerce giants like Amazon and Alibaba, the two biggest in the world, as well as growing startups. The supplementary data from those companies confirmed the trend of opening physical retail stores among e-commerce companies regardless of age, product range, location, and size. Table 2 is a side-by-side comparison of the companies.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

2.2. Analysis

The analysis focused on the data of the Turkish companies, complemented by the secondary data on other companies. We used methods based on grounded theory approaches for analysis (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In the analysis, we first tried to form categories by grouping individual answers by each interview question. However, we realized that similar issues were addressed by different interviewees in different questions. Also, some questions were related and the interviewees actually gave more information when they associated a question with another. Hence, we grouped the answers in terms of the reasons for opening physical stores and the effects of the stores on companies and e-commerce in general, and developed categories within these groups. We then tried to combine different categories. For example, in different statements, the interviewees used the term “design” to refer to the standard look of company website as well as physical stores. Similarly, they used the term “experience” to describe the new yet consistent experience of physical stores. Thus, we derived the categories of standardization and consistency from the interview statements. Further, the interviewees tied the terms to their company’s “brand”. Therefore, the categories of “standardization” and “consistency” (and some other categories) were combined to form the key issue of “brand”. Lastly, we related each key issue to our research question, trying to understand its role particularly in the link between e-commerce and traditional retail and generally in institutional maintenance. This helped develop the levels of institutional work and conceptualize the key issues as the general mechanisms of institutional maintenance. Table-3 provides the codes, categories, and key issues, from which we derived the customer-level institutional work, as an example.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

2.3. Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was to find companies starting as online/e-commerce-only and then opening physical stores. There were only a few such companies in Turkey with its relatively new e-commerce industry as compared to other countries like the USA or Canada. Another limitation was to find participants with the knowledge of the store-opening process. The companies were relatively small during the process, in which not many people were involved. As technology companies, they also had relatively high turnover rates, which made it difficult to find employees who worked long enough in those companies and were informed about the process as well as company. Hence, the number of people we could interview was very limited. In addition, this study focused on the key decision makers who represented their companies in general and were part of the process. Our main data source was the interviews with those decision makers likely to

have the most knowledge of the process. Talking to the companies' customers and suppliers in addition to decision makers would enrich our data. However, the companies had too many customers and suppliers and it was beyond the temporal and monetary resources of this study to conduct interviews with them.

3. RESULTS

The analysis points out that there are eight different mechanisms at four levels, through which physical retail as an institution contributes to the maintenance of e-commerce as another institution. At the customer level, the mechanisms are concretization and personalization. At the level of employees are the mechanisms of new tasks and involvement. Concretization and product range are at the level of suppliers. Lastly, brand and growth are at the company level.

3.1. Customer Level

The first thing successful companies do is to reach customers. For e-commerce-only companies, reaching customers may not be enough most of the time because the number of customers is much fewer compared to traditional retail. According to the US Department of Commerce (2019), only ten percent of all retail sales were generated from e-commerce in 2018. Only three percent of all retail sales came from e-commerce in 2018, according to a report by the Turkish IT Industry Association (TÜBİSAD, 2019). These numbers suggest one of the reasons why e-commerce companies enter traditional retail business.

3.1.1. Concretization

Physical stores offer something e-commerce cannot: Customers can try, touch, feel, and see a product before they buy it. A top manager of Vivense describes the concretization experience physical stores can offer and a website cannot:

“It is very difficult to touch the customer when it is an online-only company. Physical stores offer richer experience obviously. The real life cannot be replicated with any virtual world. The stores reveal all the richness of that real life. You experience everything with your five senses, drink your coffee, talk to the interior designer, touch the fabrics, sit down and feel the atmosphere in a place where you sense the aromas in your nose.”

The manager continues:

“When we did not have a store, some customers found our office address and visited our office to see our products. Maybe it is because of the nature of the products we sell; but customers really want to see them before they buy.”

The founder and CEO of Everlane, an e-commerce company selling clothing and accessories, similarly explains (CBS This Morning, 2017):

“When we started six years ago, we thought we could do this online only. But what

we found is customers like to touch things before they buy them.”

Physical stores can also provide convenience e-commerce sometimes lacks. Customers can stop by the store if it is on their way, swap items, or return them. Since companies sell the same products both online and offline, they can first try the products then buy online. The stores thus create a familiar experience for most customers used to traditional retail. Also, customers can visit the website to determine what to buy before they come to the store. Hence, the stores become an alternative way to reach out to customers. A top manager of E-Bebek explains the positive effects of physical stores on e-commerce:

“When we open a store in the regions where we sell very little online, we see an increase in the sales from our website. It is like publicity. Customers consider if we have a website as well. Physical stores are a point of contact for customers. So, they shop online, thinking that they can change or return the products through the store.”

The founder and CEO of Rent the Runway, a company that rents luxury clothing to people, similarly comments (CBS This Morning, 2016):

“... by nature of having a store in the physical market, you can courier her units from the store. If she ever has a problem, you can swap for various pieces of inventory. So, it is about creating an efficient experience for the user.”

3.1.2. Personalization

Concretization is complemented by personalization. Personalization is something every e-commerce company tries to achieve by collecting and analyzing the customer data. Physical stores are also used by companies to personalize the customer experience. Personalization in retail stores is actually not new. Apple is usually credited for opening personalized brick-and-mortar stores selling technological products. Providing one-to-one interaction with well-informed staff, Apple stores are highly regarded among retailers due to their exceptionally high conversion rates per customer visits. Similarly, the CEO of Vivense says:

“We thought that in our showrooms, our interior designers could serve customers more closely and help them decide which furniture or which color to choose.”

Another manager from Vivense adds:

“Our stores are like the missing part of the user experience in our e-commerce business. We started them as a way to complete the user experience.”

E-commerce companies use different methods for personalization to offer what seems to be missing in their online business in terms of user experience. They claim that the experience of their stores is unique and unlike traditional retail stores. One top manager from Evidia explains what they do differently:

“We added details like ordering from the store directly to your address. That is one of the things that separate us from other retailers.”

MM LaFleur, a company selling fashion and beauty products mostly to women, is another company that uses personalization. A top manager of the company explains the company’s approach (Susman, 2018):

“We decided to reimagine the shopping process by having customers come in by appointment, work with a stylist and only try on items that have been curated for them.”

Personalization tactics in physical stores thus help e-commerce companies engage with their customers closely. Companies use the stores to better introduce their products to the customer base as well as educate customers. The CEO of Casper, a USA based company selling mattresses, talks about the stores (Hanbury, 2018):

“It’s a way to educate new customers.”

Supplementler.com is a good example as well. This company sells supplement foods for athletes and most new customers are actually not familiar with many of its products. The store staff educate new customers about when and how to use which products. They also create cross-sale opportunities through education. If a customer new to bodybuilding supplements wants to buy only whey protein, for example, they sell the customer amino acids as well by explaining their benefits in the early phases of bodybuilding.

E-commerce companies use their stores to educate customers about not only their products but also technology, supporting personalization. Evidia and E-Bebek, for example, have kiosks in their stores. Customers can look at the product catalog, customize their product, and even order online from those kiosks. The store staff assist customers if they have trouble in using kiosks. Using kiosks, customers become familiar with and have a rather personalized online shopping experience while companies basically acquire new online shoppers. One top manager from E-Bebek explains:

“We create an environment for our customers to adapt to technology to familiarize them with e-commerce by using kiosks and technology in our stores.”

3.1.3. Summary

Therefore, we observe the mechanisms of concretization and personalization at the customer level. Through concretization in physical stores, customers feel, touch, and experience the products they want to buy. The stores also create a sense of familiarity. Once customers become familiar with the products and company in general, they shop online as e-commerce offers a wider variety of similar products. Through personalization, companies closely relate to their customers. The stores enable the staff to provide unique experiences for and bond with customers through

one-to-one interactions. This bond is again positively reflected in companies' e-commerce, making customers partners in the maintenance of e-commerce as an institution through their retail activity in physical stores.

3.2. Employee Level

Most e-commerce companies were startup when they decided to open their first stores. The number of employees they had ranged from five to fifty at the time of opening. Hence, almost all employees had to be bought into the idea of entering traditional retail business as their jobs would be affected. Despite some concerns on the part of employees, e-commerce companies were able to involve and retain many key employees during and after going into traditional retail through new roles and responsibilities.

3.2.1. New Tasks

Physical stores automatically create new roles and positions within e-commerce companies. Many new positions are filled with new hires. For example, Supplementler.com opens a new department handling store related issues and staffed with employees experienced in physical retailing. It also hires experienced store managers and salespeople while training newly hired, inexperienced salespeople. Vivense similarly opens a showroom department with district offices to manage its stores. It hires new, experienced staff for this department and its offices. As new employees gain field experience by working closely with customers in the stores in such positions as store manager and salesperson, their utility increases for companies. They are sometimes transferred to e-commerce units such as digital inventory management or marketing departments to bring more customer insights into e-commerce.

There are new career opportunities for the existing employees as well. Vivense, for example, bring some current employees into the showroom department to benefit from their experience and instill its company culture and values into newly hired employees. The showrooms also enable the Vivense employees to directly work with customers and improve their skills. The interior designers, for example, work in the showrooms in rotation, getting some invaluable on-the-job-training. They use the learning to design other showrooms for Vivense.

E-commerce companies also expand some of their other operations to address the needs of physical stores and add new responsibilities to the existing positions as a result. One top manager from Evidea says:

“A little more responsibility has been added to the existing positions. In the logistics section, for example, we only shipped to customers before; but now we ship to our store in mass. So, we could say it is an addition. Increased responsibilities for our existing staff.”

With the help of brick-and-mortar stores, companies thus offer both new and existing employees new career paths, training opportunities, and additional responsibilities, which are likely to improve their skills and commitment. Hence, companies are able to keep especially key employees who can help maintain e-commerce business with their new skills and increased commitment.

3.2.2. Involvement

Employees are also retained because they are involved in the store-opening process. The process actually refers to a significant organizational change resulting in new departments, tasks, and practices. Companies convince their employees of the benefits of the change and ensure their support by involving them in such a key, strategic decision. Through this involvement, they are also able to make use of the knowledge of employees for the success of the change and increase employee commitment. One top manager from Evidea explains:

“We were a startup company. As this was a common decision, we incorporated all the employees into this process. The employees were even involved in the selection and alignment of products and design of the store. Everyone joined and united under one goal.”

It is a similar experience for E-Bebek as the founder states:

“From the beginning, this has been a process we have done with all our employees.”

Employee involvement is not limited to the opening process. Once the stores are operational, employees are closely involved to collect the customer data. E-commerce companies actually collect a huge amount of digital data from their customers to give them a better shopping experience. They have different methods to get feedback from their customers. Emails, forums, blogs, real-time online chats, and customer support lines are some examples. Companies usually analyze and transform the aggregate data coming from these sources into useful information to customize their service. For example, the software engineering team uses the data to create a better user interface for the company website and develop recommendation systems for customers. The marketing team collects the data to decide on which campaigns are more successful. The operations team constructs forecast models based on the data from customers. Thus, physical stores, which facilitate human-to-human interactions between customers and employees, create an additional source of data for these teams whose work then helps improve those interactions. While the stores engage customers directly with companies and their products or services, they enable employees to better understand and respond to customer needs. One executive from Vivense shares the experience:

“Our stores have a warm, friendly atmosphere. They are a way for one-to-one communication with customers. One year ago, our showroom and office were next to each other. So, we could go directly working with customers and establish

one-to-one communication. Customers come and show us the screenshots of the product, saying that ‘I looked at here, I did something like that here.’ This helps us do customer research.”

3.2.3. Summary

Therefore, at the employee level, physical stores help maintain e-commerce as an institution through the mechanisms of new tasks and involvement. Through new tasks, they create new responsibilities for the existing positions in companies. Those responsibilities help employees develop new skills. New tasks mean new career paths as well for employees. The skill variety and commitment of employees thus increase to support companies. New tasks also result in new hires and thus an additional resource of employees, who are experienced and/or trained to use in e-commerce positions as well. Through involvement of employees, companies benefit from their experience as well as ensure their support during and after the store opening process while increasing their commitment. Moreover, the stores enable employees to be in the field, stay closely in touch with customers, and study and understand their habits, increasing employee responsiveness to customers and contribution to companies in general.

3.3. Supplier Level

The e-commerce giant, Amazon, builds its strategy around the fact that customers want a vast selection of quality products, fast delivery, and low cost today and they will want them in the future (Clifford, 2019). These features depend on suppliers. If e-commerce companies want to offer a wide variety of products, they need to work with multiple suppliers. They also need to ensure the quality either of raw materials to manufacture products or of products themselves to directly sell, both coming from particular suppliers. Moreover, suppliers’ production cost, delivery time, and storage conditions affect the price of products.

3.3.1. Concretization

The success of e-commerce companies is determined by the variety and quality of products, delivery time, and price, all of which depend on suppliers. Trust is a key factor in companies’ relationship with suppliers (Koh et al., 2012). Suppliers want to trust the economic power of companies before they do business with them. As e-commerce is a relatively new industry, it is expected that most suppliers do not know or trust e-commerce-only companies. It is certainly the case for E-Bebek in its early years. The founder of E-Bebek explains:

“We founded E-Bebek in 2001 and we could not grow our company that much until 2003 when we opened our first store. After we went into brick-and-mortar retailing, customer trust and supplier trust increased significantly.”

A top manager from E-Bebek continues:

“There were suppliers that we wanted to work with; but they refused to work with us when we were just an e-commerce company. After we started opening stores, they became our suppliers.”

As in the case of customers, physical stores help e-commerce companies to be concretized in the eyes of suppliers. They create a sense of familiarity since most suppliers are used to working with traditional retailers. Hence, they facilitate the formation of trust between companies and suppliers. There is also an economic side. The stores are a company asset. They are considered by suppliers as collateral against a possible default of the company on its debt to suppliers and provide a material basis for trust. As one top manager from Evidea puts:

“Having a store has a positive effect in the eyes of customers and suppliers”.

Trust is one factor in a successful company-supplier relationship while another factor is close communication and feedback. The concretization of e-commerce companies through brick-and-mortar stores helps them engage with customers on a more personal basis and get direct feedback. This feedback is not simply about the operation of stores. It is often about products. Companies use this customer feedback to establish better communication with the suppliers of those products. For example, Vivense offers customization of furniture products in its stores. Customers can demand changes in the color, softness, and in some cases mechanisms of furniture. Based on the positive feedback of customers visiting the stores, the company starts to provide customization on its website. Customization through physical stores as well as websites generates detailed customer feedback, which actually leads to better feedback to suppliers about what features customers want from each furniture and thus suppliers are to produce. Customer needs and tastes are thoroughly communicated to suppliers to tailor their products. A top manager from MM Lefleur (Susman, 2018) talks about the feedback:

“Our stylists have helped us determine what our customer wants. For instance, if you hear that they love a specific dress but are waiting for a new color, do whatever you can to ensure they are first in line when it comes in.”

3.3.2. Product Range

In addition to the concretization of companies in the eyes of suppliers, there is a less visible factor, increasing product range, effective at the supplier level. E-commerce has actually a big advantage over traditional retail when it comes to the variety of products. The stores are physically limited to offer different products while an e-commerce website can display thousands of products. Hence, it seems odd to argue that physical stores have an impact on the product range. A top manager of Supplementler.com actually states:

“E-commerce has a much wider selection of products than traditional retail.”

Still, physical stores positively affect companies' product range. For example, MM

Lafleur adds a new dress color not offered before opening its stores (Susman, 2018). Similarly, thanks to its stores, some suppliers accept to work with E-Bebek, enriching its product range. In fact, the stores can result in new additions, which companies never think of before or which seem to make no sense for online-only companies. This is the case for Vivense. The company starts to offer a larger variety of fabric options for furniture products on its website after they are displayed in its stores for the experience of customers. Through the website, customers can now order different fabrics to be sent so that they can see and touch them before selecting one. This feature is generally not available in online shopping.

The increase in the product range also benefits suppliers, which can now reach customers with more of their products and increase their revenues. As new products added to the product range and offered in the stores are also offered on the websites, suppliers' reach and visibility significantly increase in the market. Although suppliers create unique brands under different categories for companies including Evidea, E-Bebek, Vivense, and Supplementler.com to sell only in those companies, they also produce their own brands available through other companies. Thus, e-commerce companies' sale of a supplier's products in their stores and then on their websites supports the sale of the supplier's other products and helps strengthen the supplier's market position. A mutually beneficial relationship is then established and reproduced between companies, for which product variety is a critical success factor, and suppliers, which exploit increasing visibility in the market.

3.3.3. Summary

Therefore, at the supplier level, concretization and product range work as the mechanisms of institutional maintenance for e-commerce. Concretization through physical stores helps suppliers build trust in e-commerce companies as most suppliers are accustomed to working with traditional retailers. The stores also provide an effective, concrete source of customer feedback, which improves communication and feedback between companies and suppliers about products. Increased trust and better feedback contribute to the success of e-commerce companies. Moreover, physical stores create opportunities to add to the product range of companies while increasing the visibility of suppliers. With new products, companies increase their variety for customers as suppliers expand their reach in the market. The relationship between companies and suppliers is thus strengthened due to mutual gains, again supporting companies' success in e-commerce.

3.4. Company Level

Although e-commerce and traditional retail as institutions are different, both have the same purpose: to generate revenue for companies. They might have different customer bases, different suppliers, and even different employees. However, they

are part of the same company. Companies actually do not want to choose between e-commerce and traditional retail when defining themselves. They are rather a combination of both.

3.4.1. Brand

While customers' habits change from traditional towards online shopping, brand image remains a key factor affecting those habits (Gommans et al., 2001; Smith and Brynjolfsson, 2008) and thus the success of e-commerce companies. E-commerce is a relatively new industry compared to traditional brick-and-mortar retailing. Although the use of internet and e-commerce penetration increase day-by-day, customers' familiarity is still relatively much less. Physical stores then become a means for e-commerce companies to increase familiarity and brand awareness among customers and build trust towards companies' brand. A top manager from Evidea states:

“Although e-commerce has a big market share in Turkey, having a physical store and putting your brand out there place you somewhere else in the eyes of customers.”

Increased brand awareness results in increased trust reflected in increased revenues as one top executive from E-Bebek says:

“After the opening of the store, the trust of people increased. At the same time, the revenue from the e-commerce website increased due to this trust.”

The increasing access to internet all around the world changes how companies raise brand awareness. Digital advertisements and online marketing campaigns become much more important. E-commerce companies usually build their marketing strategies and brand on digital advertising and new generation online methods as they are naturally internet companies. Yet, they also use more traditional means like billboards, TV, radio, or newspaper commercials. From an advertising standpoint, a brick-and-mortar store is similar to a permanent billboard physically placed in a strategic point where a lot of customers pass by such as a crowded street or shopping mall. Like the billboard, it can be used to advertise company products, announce new sales campaigns, and promote a positive brand image. One top executive from E-Bebek explains:

“We see our stores as a permanent banner of our brand and website spread to 124 different points in Turkey. We sold 10 million bags of product last year and those 10 million bags were carried around by our customers all over Turkey, advertising E-Bebek and E-Bebek.com.”

Physical stores allow companies to be creative in advertising their products and brand and to host in-store events such as yoga classes or workshops. Everlane, for example, hosts an event about the future of retail where customers even get the chance to meet the company CEO and ask questions about the company's

strategies (CBS This Morning, 2017). As a company emphasizing environmental responsibility and transparency in its operations, it also lets customers in the stores listen to the recorded stories of its factories, which are claimed to be the cleanest in the world, and the sounds of different manufacturing processes like making a t-shirt. Another example is Warby Parker, a company selling sunglasses, which creates an experience called the green room where customers make a video of themselves with special effects (Estes, 2017). At the same time, customers try different sunglasses. E-commerce companies thus use the stores to connect with and attract customers in creative ways, which help spread their brand and stick it in customers' mind.

Companies also try to preserve the consistency of their brand image. Since they are initially online-only, they build their brand through their website. They already have a logo and color palette they use on the website. They carry the same logo and colors to their physical stores to ensure consistency. One top executive from Evidea explains:

“Our idea was that we were actually a digital brand. But we wanted to give our customers a physical experience. So, we designed this experience. With our colors, some kiosk experiences we developed inside the stores, with the general design of the stores, with the product catalog we created inside, we designed an Evidea experience for our customers.”

Hence, through both websites and stores, companies try to offer the same experience, which is generally possible through a standard design. For example, Vivense has a standard interior design as well as opening process for all of its stores. Until 2012, E-Bebek follows a different approach to design each new store individually so that each looks differently. After 2012, it standardizes the design of all the stores now with the same look and feel, which promote the same brand image.

For e-commerce companies, both websites and stores are part of customer experience, which makes their brands. Companies value this experience more than almost anything else because it is what customers become attached to. Physical stores are a way for companies to fill the void in customer experience, which cannot be filled with online-only presence. The stores overcome the lack of human-to-human interaction and complete the missing part. One Evidea top executive says:

“The main thing here is the fact that the two complement each other in the long term. In this way, we try to create a brand; this brand creates an online as well as an offline experience.”

3.4.2. Growth

Brick-and-mortar stores also enable e-commerce companies to grow in terms of

revenue and size since they help reach more customers. This is especially important for companies in Turkey where e-commerce makes up only the three percent of the whole retail market (TÜBİSAD, 2019). E-Bebek, for example, is one of the first movers in the world, which start out as e-commerce-only and open physical retail stores. It starts to operate in the early 2000s when the use of internet in Turkey is as low as 5.4 percent among all age groups (DPT, 2010). Given the very small size of the market, the founder of E-Bebek explains how the stores help grow in e-commerce:

“At that time, e-commerce was used only on weekdays and on weekends it was entirely in the stores. We have turned into a company that works at the same speed for 7 days. We have achieved very good stock turnover. So, we have a very nice structure that supports both websites and stores.”

A small e-commerce company with a relatively low amount of sales at the time of opening its first physical store, E-Bebek now has 124 stores in Turkey and is the leading company in mother and baby products. According to its top executives, the growth in physical stores and e-commerce go hand in hand as online shopping penetration increases rapidly every year. Similarly, Supplementler.com sees an opportunity for growth in the market of supplementary foods for athletes when it opens its first store in 2015. In fact, as an already major player at the time, the company's main motivation to enter traditional retail business is to dominate the Turkish market in general as one of the leading companies decides to withdraw and close down its stores in Turkey. Through its physical stores, Supplementler.com expands its operations and becomes the market leader. The company largely eliminates not only offline but also online competition from other companies.

3.4.3. Summary

Therefore, traditional retail contributes to institutional maintenance of e-commerce through the mechanisms of brand and growth at the company level. Brick-and-mortar retailing firstly increases awareness of companies and their brands among customers who are accustomed to physical stores. The stores are also used as a permanent billboard to advertise company brand and products, allowing creative in-store promotions while offering an offline customer experience in line with online experience. They thus help create a consistent brand image for e-commerce companies. Physical stores secondly mean more sales. They facilitate the growth of companies by providing access to rather traditional market segments. They also lead the customers of traditional retail to online retail, increasing sales in general. Brick-and-mortar retailing can even help some e-commerce companies eliminate competition and dominate the market as a whole.

4. DISCUSSION

Past literature generally ignores the question of how a relatively old, established institution can be used to maintain a relatively new, alternative institution. The

literature is mainly about the internal mechanisms of institutional maintenance (Acquier et al., 2018; Blanc and Huault, 2011; Clark and Newell, 2013; Collien et al., 2016; Colombero and Boxenbaum, 2019; Grafstrom and Windell, 2012; Nite et al., 2016; Raviola and Norback, 2013; Styhre, 2013; Wright et al., 2017), with the implicit assumption that alternative institutions disrupt rather than maintain other institutions. Alternative institutions are considered as threats. In fact, we observe some disruption in e-commerce companies analyzed in this study in the form of cannibalization as physical stores draw some customers away from e-commerce. The stores offer a familiar and convenient experience for customers. Therefore, companies might initially see a decrease in the number of online customers from the areas where they open their first physical store. However, they quickly make up for this decrease as the stores encourage traditional customers to shop online. E-commerce companies utilize brick-and-mortar stores to continue their existence as online retailers. Thus, this study shows that it is possible to use an old, more established institution to maintain a relatively new, even alternative one. In this sense, the study adds a new perspective to the research of institutional maintenance.

The study also supports the views of organizational scholars (Currie et al., 2012; Koskela-Huotari et al., 2016; Nite et al., 2016) showing that the line separating different types of institutional work is sometimes blurred. Although there are some studies implying the coexistence of creation and maintenance work (Acquier et al., 2018; Heinze and Weber, 2016; Labelle and Rouleau, 2017; Zilber, 2009), there are not many studies examining the relationship between maintenance and disruption work. It seems unlikely that institutional maintenance work can also lead to disruption or vice versa. However, this study indicates that institutional actors' work to maintain an institution can at least partially disrupt the same institution. Actors' work can have several effects, which might be in opposite directions, disrupting as well as maintaining the institution.

The study is also in line with the existing finding that internal mechanisms are important in institutional maintenance. The literature discusses, for example, Michelin's application of its established star rating system to protect its dominance in haute cuisine rating (Bouty et al., 2013), patient advocates' reference to institutional rules to solve conflicts between different institutional actors (Heaphy, 2013), clinical geneticists' modification of the existing roles against the threat to their institutional positions (Currie et al., 2012), the Cambridge University members' performance of historical rituals to reproduce the British class system (Dacin et al., 2010), and police inspectors' use of technology to continue the practice of unpaid work (Turnbull and Wass, 2015). Similarly, when e-commerce companies open brick-and-mortar stores, they use some of their standard business practices. For example, they continue their attempts to personalize products and expand the product range. In addition, they usually use the same warehouse and

associated systems to distribute goods sold in physical stores. Most companies also continue to work with some of the existing employees. Hence, while suggesting a new perspective that emphasizes the role of external, alternative institutions in institutional maintenance, this study supports the existing insight that actors commonly utilize internal practices to maintain institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study points out that an older institution like traditional retail can be used to maintain a newer institution like e-commerce although the latter is a partially disruptive alternative for or even a replacement of the former. It identifies general mechanisms, through which the efforts and activities of companies, employees, suppliers, and customers turn into institutional work of maintenance and thus traditional physical stores ironically help maintain non-traditional online stores. The study shows that eight different mechanisms at four levels work towards maintenance. For customers, traditional stores help concretize e-commerce companies and personalize customer experience. For employees, they create new responsibilities and tasks and increase their involvement in both strategic and daily decisions. For suppliers, they develop trust by making e-commerce companies a concrete entity to do business with and promote visibility by expanding the product range and reach. Lastly, for companies themselves, they increase brand awareness and result in growth through additional marketing and sales opportunities. Therefore, traditional retail strengthens the position of e-commerce companies in the market by facilitating better relations with their customers, employees, and suppliers as well as directly contributes to companies' image and growth.

This study is also one of the first studies that examine a new trend, e-commerce companies' entering the business of traditional retail. It highlights some of the reasons and outcomes of this trend by analyzing the data collected from the early adopters in Turkey. In this sense, it has some practical implications for other e-commerce companies planning to go the traditional route in retail. First, the study demonstrates that physical stores expand the customer base by increasing familiarity and personalizing shopping experience. However, customers should not be the only focus in the store-opening process. Companies should ensure employee contribution into the process through giving more responsibility and authority and integrate suppliers by developing trust and selling more of their products. Second, the experience of early adopters implies that growth is an important reason as well as outcome of opening physical stores. Yet, growth is rather related to brand awareness, which is another reason and then outcome and thus which should be strategically used for growth. Third, companies should develop a holistic approach so that online and offline retailing are closely integrated around a common strategy. They should use traditional retail and e-commerce in alignment to develop a common brand image and reinforce this image by making up for the missing parts inherent in each of these two institutional types.

In general, the experience of the first-movers in Turkey suggests that success is more likely for e-commerce companies planning to open brick-and-mortar stores if they carefully plan their moves at the levels of customers, employees, suppliers as well as companies themselves.

This study indicates a number of directions for future research. First, the study is limited by the scale of e-commerce in Turkey where e-commerce companies are actually small in terms of size, revenue, and market share within the whole retail industry and entering tradition retail business is a relatively new trend among these companies. It uses the secondary data on non-Turkish companies as supplementary. It might be useful to increase the scale with the data on companies in the countries including the US, which has the largest number of and some of the biggest e-commerce companies in the world with very high volume of sales even as compared to traditional retail (Pettypiece, 2015). Given that the industry giants such as Amazon and Alibaba continue to open brick-and-mortar stores and thus this trend is likely to spread, there is an opportunity to develop a more complete analysis of the trend and its implications through a large sample of companies bigger in size and impact on the industry. Second, this study looks into the retail industry and the role of offline in the maintenance of online retail. Researchers might look at other industries such as the media (Grafstrom and Windell, 2012; Raviola and Norback, 2013), which might have different mechanisms of maintenance or perhaps disruption. In the case of media, for example, online newspapers might actually disrupt more than maintain printed newspapers because of the industry-specific conditions. Hence, future research might continue to identify and better formulate the conditions of institutional maintenance, in which alternative institutions are involved.

E-TİCARETİN GELENEKSEL PERAKENDECİLİK ÜZERİNDEN KURUMSAL MUHAFAZASI

1. GİRİŞ VE LİTERATÜR

Bu çalışma e-ticaret firmalarının geleneksel fiziksel mağaza açma süreçlerini bir kurumsal koruma veya muhafaza işi olarak çözümlenmektedir (Lawrence ve Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence vd., 2009). Geleneksel perakende mağazalar e-ticaret firmalarının piyasadaki konumlarını sağlamlaştırmaktadır. Bu anlamda, nispeten eski kurumsal bir yapı olarak geleneksel perakendecilik veya mağazacılık, zamanla yerine geçebilecek nispeten yeni başka bir kurumsal yapı olarak e-ticaretin muhafazasına yardımcı olmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bu iki kısmen birbirine alternatif ve zarar veren yapı arasındaki kurumsal muhafaza ilişkisini incelemektedir.

Çalışma, aktörlerin edimlerini ve uygulamalarını kurumsal muhafaza yönünde şekillendiren ve geleneksel perakendeciliğin e-ticaret üzerindeki olumlu etkisini açıklayan genel mekanizmaları ortaya koymaktadır.

Kurumsal iş, bireylerin ve organizasyonların yeni kurumlar yaratma ve var olan kurumları bozma veya koruma amaçlı edimlerini ve uygulamalarını ifade eder (Lawrence ve Suddaby, 2006). Organizasyon araştırmacıları kurumsal muhafaza işini pek çok farklı bağlamda çalışmaktadırlar (Gawer ve Phillips, 2013; Mena ve Suddaby, 2016; Turnbull ve Wass, 2015; Zietsma ve Lawrence, 2010). Kurumsal muhafaza üzerine yapılan bu çalışmalar genellikle içsel süreçlere odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmalarda yemek, sağlık, eğitim, ve güvenlik sektörlerindeki içsel düzenekler konu edilmiştir (Acquier vd., 2018; Blanc ve Huault, 2011; Clark ve Newell, 2013; Collien vd., 2016; Colombero ve Boxenbaum, 2019; Grafstrom ve Windell, 2012; Nite vd., 2016; Raviola ve Norback, 2013; Styhre, 2013; Wright vd., 2017). Dolayısıyla var olan çalışmalar muhafaza edilecek kurumun yerine geçme olasılığı da bulunan bir başka dışsal kurumun etkisini görmezden gelmektedirler (Blanc ve Huault, 2011; Clark ve Newell, 2013; Grafstrom ve Windell, 2012; Nite vd., 2016; Raviola ve Norback, 2013). Bu çalışma, literatürdeki bu eksikliğe odaklanmakta ve e-ticaret firmalarının kurumsal varlıklarını muhafaza etmek için fiziksel mağazaları kullanmalarını irdelemektedir.

2. YÖNTEM

Bu çalışma kurumsal muhafaza işini sosyal bir süreç olarak ele almaktadır. Çalışma, e-ticaret firmalarından toplanan verileri kullanarak bir kurumun başka bir kurumu muhafaza etmek için nasıl kullanıldığına dair bir bakış açısı geliştirmektedir. Bu amaca uygun olarak, kurumsal muhafazada rol alan aktörlerin tecrübelerini anlamaya odaklanan nitel yöntemleri uygulamaktadır (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Araştırma sorusu çerçevesinde, e-ticaret yapmak üzere kurulmuş, sonradan fiziksel mağazalar açmış ve en az beş yıldır faaliyette olan dört Türk firması tespit edilmiştir. Bunlar, Vivense, E-Bebek, Evidea, ve Supplementler.com firmalarıdır. Çalışmanın temel verisi, bu firmaların üst düzey yöneticileriyle yapılan on adet mülakattan toplanmıştır. Daha fazla veri toplamak amacıyla, internette araştırma yapılmış, fiziksel mağazacılığa sonradan geçmiş ve konu üzerine yöneticileriyle yapılmış mülakatlarına erişim olan onaltı yabancı firma belirlenmiş ve Türk firmalarına ek olarak çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Çözümlemede Türk firmalara odaklanılırken yabancı firmaların verisi tamamlayıcı olarak kullanılmıştır. Çözümlemede gömülü kuram yöntemleri takip edilmiştir (Glaser, 1978; Glaser ve Strauss, 1967). Mülakat sorularına verilen cevaplar fiziksel mağaza açmanın nedenleri ve sonuçları çerçevesinde gruplandırılmıştır. Bu gruplandırma sonucunda kategoriler oluşturulmuştur. Kategoriler benzerliklerine göre birleştirilerek temel meselelere ulaşılmıştır. Son olarak, temel meselelerin e-ticaretle geleneksel mağazacılık arasında oluşturdukları bağlantı ve kurumsal muhafazadaki rolleri yorumlanmıştır.

3. BULGULAR

Çözümleme, kurumsal bir yapı olarak geleneksel perakendeciliğin başka bir kurumsal yapı olarak e-ticaretin muhafazasında rol oynamasını sağlayan dört düzeyde sekiz mekanizmanın varlığına işaret etmektedir. Müşteri düzeyinde, somutlaştırma ve kişiselleştirme mekanizmaları gözlemlenmektedir. Fiziksel mağazalar ürünü, müşterilerin doğrudan tecrübe etmelerini sağlayarak, somutlaştırmaktadırlar. Mağazalar aynı zamanda aşinalık hissi yaratmaktadırlar. Müşteriler, ürün ve firma için aşinalık geliştirdiğinde, daha fazla seçenek sunan e-ticareti kullanmaya başlamaktadırlar. Kişiselleştirmeyse, firmaların müşterilerle daha yakın ilişkiler kurmasını sağlamaktadır. Mağazalar birebir etkileşimlerle müşterilere özgün tecrübeler sunmaktadırlar. Bu şekilde kurulan bağ e-ticaret tarafına olumlu yansımakta ve böylece müşteriler mağazalardaki etkinlikleriyle e-ticaretin kurumsal muhafazasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadırlar.

Çalışan düzeyinde, fiziksel mağazalar çalışanlar için yeni görevler yaratma ve çalışanları mağazacılık sürecine dahil etme mekanizmalarıyla e-ticarete destek vermektedirler. Fiziksel mağazalar öncelikle çalışanlar için yeni görevler ve sorumluluklar yaratmakta, dolayısıyla çalışanların yeni yetenekler edinmesine yardımcı olmakta ve kariyer olanaklarını çoğaltmaktadırlar. Çalışanların yetenekleri çeşitlenirken firmaya olan bağlılıkları ve katkıları artmaktadır. Yeni görevler fiziksel mağazacılıkta tecrübeleri ve e-ticaret konusunda eğitilebilir yeni çalışanların işe alınmasını da beraberinde getirerek, e-ticaret için ek bir işgücü de oluşturmaktadır. Çalışanların mağazacılık sürecine dahil edilmesiyle, firmaların çalışanların tecrübelerinden yararlanmalarını, desteklerini almalarını ve bağlılıklarını artırmalarını sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca mağazalar çalışanların sahada, müşterilerle yakın ilişkiler kurmalarına yardımcı olarak, onların alışkanlıklarını anlamalarını ve isteklerine daha hızlı cevap vermelerini kolaylaştırmaktadır. Böylece çalışanların firmalara olan katkısı yine artmaktadır.

Tedarikçi düzeyinde, yine somutlaştırma ve ürün çeşitliliği mekanizmaları etkili olmaktadır. Tedarikçilerinbüyük kısmı geleneksel perakendecilerle çalışmaya alışkın olduklarından ve fiziksel mağazalar e-ticaret firmalarını somutlaştırdıklarından, tedarikçilerin bu firmalara güvenmelerine olanak sağlamaktadır. Mağazalar aynı zamanda müşteri talepleri ve memnuniyeti konusunda etkili ve somut geri bildirim sağlayarak, firmalar ve tedarikçiler arasındaki iletişimi ve geri bildirimini iyileştirmektedirler. Artan güven ve iletişim e-ticaret firmalarının başarısına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Mağazalar ayrıca firmaların ürün çeşitliliğini artırırken tedarikçileri daha görünür kılmaktadırlar. Piyasa erişimleri artan tedarikçiler daha güçlü bir konuma gelmektedirler. Böylece e-ticaret firmaları ve tedarikçiler arasındaki ilişki de güçlenmekte, firmaların başarısı desteklenmektedir.

Son olarak firma düzeyinde, geleneksel mağazalar e-ticarete markalaşma ve büyüme mekanizmalarıyla katkı vermektedirler. Mağazalar öncelikle fiziksel mağazalara alışkın olan müşteriler arasında, firmaların ve markalarının bilinirliğini artırmaktadırlar. Mağazalar, markalar ve ürünler için sabit bir reklam panosu

gibi de kullanılmakta, yaratıcı tanıtımlara olanak tanırken müşterilere e-ticaretle uyumlu bir tecrübe sunmaktadırlar. Dolayısıyla mağazalar e-ticaret firmaları için tutarlı bir marka imajı yaratmaya yardımcı olmaktadır. Fiziksel mağazalar aynı zamanda daha fazla satış anlamına gelmektedirler. Geleneksel müşteri kesimlerine erişim sağlayan mağazalar firmaların büyümesine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Geleneksel mağaza müşterilerini e-ticarete yönlendirerek, satışların genel olarak artmasını sağlamaktadırlar. Mağazalar bazı e-ticaret firmalarının rekabetçiliğini geliştirerek piyasada lider konuma gelmelerinin de yolunu açmaktadırlar.

4. TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Kurumsal muhafaza işi üzerine yapılan çalışmalar nispeten eski, yerleşik bir kurumun nispeten yeni, ona seçenek oluşturan başka bir kurumun muhafazası için nasıl kullanılabileceği sorusunu genellikle göz ardı etmektedirler. Var olan literatür, kurumsal muhafazanın içsel mekanizmalarıyla ilgilidir (Acquier vd., 2018; Blanc ve Huault, 2011; Clark ve Newell, 2013; Collien vd., 2016; Colombero ve Boxenbaum, 2019; Grafstrom ve Windell, 2012; Nite vd., 2016; Raviola ve Norback, 2013; Styhre, 2013; Wright vd., 2017). Bu çalışma geleneksel fiziksel perakendecilik gibi bir kurumun, e-ticaret gibi yeni ve alternatif bir kurumun kurumsal varlığını devam ettirmek için kullanılabileceğini göstermektedir. Çalışma, firmaların, çalışanların, tedarikçilerin ve müşterilerin edimlerini kurumsal muhafaza işine dönüştüren ve geleneksel perakendeciliğin geleneksel olmayan perakendeciliği muhafaza etmesinin önünü açan mekanizmaları tanımlamaktadır. İlk, geleneksel mağazalar e-ticaret firmalarının somutlaşmasına yardım ederken müşteriye kişisel bir deneyim sunmaktadırlar. İkincisi, çalışanlar için yeni görevler ve sorumluluklar yaratan mağazalar, çalışanların stratejik ve operasyonel kararlara katılımını da kolaylaştırmaktadırlar. Üçüncü olarak, e-ticareti geleneksel bir görünüme kavuşturan, ürüne erişimi artıran, ve ürün yelpazesini çeşitlendiren mağazalarla birlikte, tedarikçilerin e-ticaret konusundaki görece güvensizliği azalmakta ve piyasadaki görünürlükleri artmaktadır. Son olarak, firmalar mağazalar yardımıyla marka bilinirliği sağlamakta ve yeni pazarlama ve satış olanaklarıyla büyümeye devam etmektedirler. Dolayısıyla geleneksel perakendecilik, e-ticaret firmalarının müşterileri, çalışanları ve tedarikçileriyle daha iyi ilişkiler geliştirmesine yol açarak piyasadaki konumlarını güçlendirirken, tanınırlıklarına ve büyümelerine de katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Çalışma, fiziksel mağazacılık yapmak isteyen e-ticaret firmaları için bazı önerilere işaret etmektedir. Birinci olarak, geleneksel perakendecilik sektörüne girmek isteyen firmalar sorumluluk ve yetki vererek hem çalışanların, güven oluşturarak ve ürün çeşitliliğini artırarak hem de tedarikçilerin sürece katılımını sağlamalıdır. İkinci olarak, büyüme ve marka bilinirliği arasındaki ilişki dikkate alınarak, marka stratejik olarak büyüme yönünde kullanılmalıdır. Son olarak, firmalar fiziksel mağazacılığı ve e-ticareti ortak bir strateji etrafında bütünleştirerek yürütmelidirler.

Çalışmanın sonucunda iki araştırma önerisi öne çıkmaktadır. İlk bu çalışma, e-ticaret firmalarının bütün perakende sektörü içinde büyüklük, ciro, ve piyasa payı açısından oldukça küçük olduğu ve bu firmalar arasında geleneksel perakendecilik sektörüne girişin nispeten yeni olduğu Türkiye'deki e-ticaret sektörünün ölçeğiyle sınırlıdır. Geleneksel perakendecilikle karşılaştırıldığında bile ciro açısından dünyadaki bazı en büyük e-ticaret firmalarının bulunduğu ABD gibi ülkelerdeki firmaların verileriyle, çalışmanın ölçeğinin büyütülmesi yararlı olacaktır. İkinci olarak, bu çalışma perakende sektörüne ve fiziksel mağazacılığın e-ticaret üzerindeki olumlu etkisine bakmaktadır. Araştırmacılar alternatif kurumsal yapılar arasında bozucu etkilerin ağır basacağı medya gibi diğer sektörleri inceleyerek farklı mekanizmaları ortaya koyabilirler.

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KATKI ORANI / CONTRIBUTION RATE	AÇIKLAMA / EXPLANATION	KATKIDA BULUNANLAR / CONTRIBUTORS
Fikir veya Kavram / <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikrini oluşturmak / <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Bahtiyar Onur GEYİK Çağrı TOPAL
Tasarım / <i>Design</i>	Yöntemi, ölçeği ve deseni tasarlamak / <i>Designing method, scale and pattern</i>	Bahtiyar Onur GEYİK Çağrı TOPAL
Veri Toplama ve İşleme / <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlenmek ve raporlamak / <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Bahtiyar Onur GEYİK Çağrı TOPAL
Tartışma ve Yorum / <i>Discussion and Interpretation</i>	Bulguların değerlendirilmesinde ve sonuçlandırılmasında sorumluluk almak / <i>Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings</i>	Bahtiyar Onur GEYİK Çağrı TOPAL
Literatür Taraması / <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak / <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Bahtiyar Onur GEYİK Çağrı TOPAL

Table 1: Firm Profiles

FIRMS	VIVENSE	EVIDEA	SUPPLEMENTLER	E-BEBEK
Year of Establishment	2013	2008	2006	2000
Year of First Store Opening	2014	2016	2010	2003
Main Products Sold	Home furniture and decoration items	Home products, kitchenware, garden ware	Supplements for athletes	Mother and baby products
Operating Countries	Turkey	Turkey	Turkey	Turkey
Number of Physical Stores	23	1	32	136

Table 2: Profiles of Companies Outside of Turkey

FIRMS	Year of Establishment	Year of First Store Opening	Main Products Sold	Location of Headquarters
MM Lafleur	2013	2017	Women clothing and accessories	USA
Casper	2014	2018	Mattress	USA
Away Travel	2015	2016	Luggage	USA
Everlane	2010	2017	Clothing	USA
Brika	2013	2015	Designer and crafted gift items	Canada
Warby Parker	2010	2013	Sunglasses	USA
Amazon	1996	2015	Marketplace - All kinds of items	USA
Birchbox	2010	2014	Makeup, haircare and skincare products	USA
Bonobos	2007	2012	Menswear	USA
Alibaba	1999	2017	Marketplace -Wholesaler	China
Indochino	2014	2017	Custom-made menswear	Canada
Rent the Runway	2009	2014	Rental designer dresses and handbags	USA
BaubleBar	2010	2015	Fashion jewelry	USA
Adore me	2011	2018	Lingerie	USA/France

Frank & Oak	2012	2014	Clothing	Canada
Allbirds	2014	2018	Shoes	USA

Table 3: Codes, Categories, and Key Issues for Customer-level Institutional Work

First-level	Second-level	Third-level	Fourth-level	
<i>Codes or actual statements</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Key issue</i>	<i>Concept</i>	
<p>“The stores reveal all the richness of that real life.”</p> <p>“Customers like to touch things before they buy them.”</p>	Direct experience	Concretization	Customer-level institutional work through the mechanisms of concretization and personalization	Maintenance of online through offline stores
<p>“They shop online, thinking that they can change or return the products.”</p> <p>“If she ever has a problem, you can swap for various pieces.”</p>	Convenience and familiarity			
<p>“Our interior designers could serve customers more closely and help them decide.”</p> <p>“Our stores are like the missing part of the user experience.”</p>	Close interaction			
<p>“It’s a way to educate new customers.”</p> <p>“We create an environment for our customers to adapt to technology.”</p>	Customer education	Personalization		